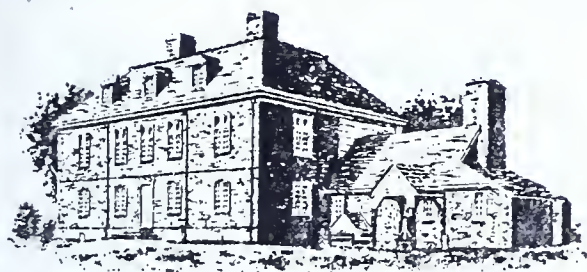


PY H673.17/45/6 P415 1950
Pennsylvania Historical and
Museum Commission.
Pennsbury Manor, Falls
Township, Bucks County



Pennsbury Manor

Falls Township, Bucks County

**THE RE-CREATED HOME OF
WILLIAM PENN**

**Founder and First Governor
of Pennsylvania**

Begun 1683

Re-created 1938

**Property of the Commonwealth
of Pennsylvania**

**Administered by
PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND
MUSEUM COMMISSION
Harrisburg
1950**



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Pennsbury Manor

WILLIAM PENN has a secure place among the great men of history, as a model of wisdom, tolerance, and enlightenment in government. He was not only an outstanding figure and a positive force in the record of human progress, but he was also a practical business man and an empire-builder. At the same time he was unusual in insisting that the aboriginal inhabitants be fairly compensated for their lands.

Interested in securing a haven for persecuted Quakers, William Penn was great and good enough to open Pennsylvania as a haven for all refugees from religious and political intolerance. He hoped to direct in person the development of his "holy experiment," and it was therefore natural that he should make plans for building a home in his new Province.

A country home would best suit his inclinations. Before his departure to America he had written to his wife and children: "Of cities and towns of concourse beware; the world is apt to stick close to those who have lived and got wealth there; a country life and estate I like best for my children." These thoughts, no doubt, guided his selection of a place of residence in Pennsylvania.

Such a spot William Penn found on the banks of his "glorious Delaware," about

Many improvements were made under the immediate direction of Penn or of his wife Hannah. Repairs were made, and outbuildings and additions erected. In August and September, 1700, there were letters requesting "3 or 4,000 bricks," "150 foot of boards," and "a load or thirty bushels of lime."

The Manor House, as completed, was large and commodious, well suited for its purpose, 60 feet in length and 40 feet in width. Its total cost, with furnishings, is said to have been seven thousand pounds. Wide halls and generous rooms gave it a spacious beauty which modern architects have ably re-created.

Standing upon an elevation of some fifteen feet above the tide and facing the slow-flowing Delaware, it was an imposing structure. Attractive formal gardens enhanced its beauty. A large retinue of servants waited upon every need, and the records show the consumption of truly astonishing quantities of food. Visitors were seldom lacking and Indian neighbors were entertained in lavish style. Several treaties with the Indians were signed there.

Magnificence was followed by decay. Shortly after Penn's return to England, James Logan wrote of the possibility of the Manor's rental at forty pounds a year with all repairs to be undertaken by the tenants.

When Thomas Penn visited the property in 1736, he found it "very near falling, the

roof open as well as windows, and the woodwork almost rotten." No one had occupied it for twenty years. In 1797, as the new Republic was setting forth upon its rich destiny, an observer found that Pennsbury was but the ruins of an "ancient pile, some of the very thick walls still remaining, the Lintel that was over the door lays near the ruins dated 'W. 83 P.' scarcely legible."

Pennsbury had become little more than a name. The original lands steadily diminished in size. Another house, which now may be observed in a new location as the superintendent's house, was built upon a part of the old ruins.

Happily, in more recent times there were those who labored and longed for the return of Pennsbury Manor to its once proud estate, and the permanent re-creation of the once majestic property as a monument to an outstanding figure in Pennsylvania and world history. As a result of the labors of these few, devoted for the most part to the religious faith followed by William Penn, the site of the buildings and nearly ten surrounding acres were deeded by the Warner Company to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1932. Administration of this property as a Pennsbury Memorial was then vested in the Pennsylvania Historical Commission. Additional land was acquired in 1940 to provide a better setting for the buildings, making a total of 40.61 acres.

Originally, few dreamed that more than a Pennsbury Memorial Park could be maintained as a monument to the Founder of Pennsylvania. An archaeological investigation of the site was undertaken, preliminary to any actual decision about the development of the memorial. This task was spread over a period of two years, and revealed the location and dimensions of various foundations.

In 1936, the Pennsylvania Historical Commission requested R. Brognard Okie, upon recommendation of a committee of leading architects, to prepare plans for a possible re-creation of Pennsbury Manor. Careful historical research, with the help of the archaeological evidence, made possible the undertaking of this great task. Upon the basis of all scraps of available evidence, the architect literally created anew the Pennsbury of William Penn.

The various buildings, Manor House, bake-and-brew house, office building and stable, were officially declared complete on July 6, 1939. Later, a landscaping and gardening program was begun, under the direction of Thomas W. Sears. Penn himself had paid as much attention to his gardens and trees as to the design of the buildings, and proportionate care was taken with this phase of the plan. Flower gardens, kitchen garden, fences, hedges and trees, all are in keeping with the time of William Penn, while roads, parking lots and paths are provided for the modern visitor.

The proper furnishing of the Manor House has been a task of major proportions. As in the case of other phases of the re-creation, expert opinion and advice were

one court into another lay'd, also at the door." "The partition between the best parler & the great Room the Servants used to eat in, should be wainscoated up even with the chimnys at least and double leav'd doors, one next one & tother next tother room, which makes a Kind of dark closet between & no matter for wainscoat." He desired that "twenty young populars, about 18 inches round, beheaded, to twenty foot" should be planted "in a walk below the Steps to the water."

From London in the autumn of 1685, he informed James Harrison that a skilled gardener had been sent to take care of the elaborate grounds. Penn complained of lack of information as to the progress at the Manor. Once more he emphasized that he desired "a good pair of staires at the landing & a handsom walk to the house of Gravil, or paved with pitt Stones." Despite the difficulties which confronted him in England and the multitudinous interests of a busy man, Penn kept up a continuous stream of instructions to his manager.

William Penn returned to Pennsylvania in December, 1699, with his family. He remained in his Province until late in 1701, when his family's dislike for colonial life and a threat to transfer his Province to royal rule caused his return to England. During this sojourn of about two years, he frequently was in residence at Pennsbury, which enjoyed a period of hospitable magnificence.

twenty-four miles northeast of Philadelphia and convenient to the Friends Yearly Meeting at Burlington, New Jersey. In the summer of 1682, William Markham, Penn's deputy governor, had purchased land in Bucks County from the Indians, including the tract known as Pennsbury Manor. This estate had a frontage of five and one-half miles on the Delaware, and was a country seat worthy of the dignity of the Proprietor. Penn was delighted with the site and ordered the construction of suitable buildings.

Late in 1682, when William Penn made a tour to New York, Long Island, New Jersey, and Maryland, it is likely that he visited and approved the site of his new residence. He certainly visited his Manor in July, 1683, and in March and April, 1684, for there are documents dated from Pennsbury in those months. But Penn's dream of the peaceful supervision of his Province from this country home was rudely broken when circumstances called him back to England in August, 1684. From England there then flowed letter after letter with suggestions and details as to the development of Pennsbury.

Most of this correspondence which has been preserved was directed to James Harrison, steward of his "Plantation at Pennsbury, in Pennsylvania." On May 19, 1685, the Proprietor emphasized the importance of a proper laying out of the gardens, and he informed Harrison, "I would have steps at the water side, & out of

sought. This task was completed in 1946, under the direction of a special committee of the Pennsbury Advisory Board.

Today those who walk about the property and wander through the wide halls and beautiful rooms of the Manor House, find themselves escaping from the hard realities of our modern world and unconsciously drifting into the calm and quiet moods of the seventeenth century Pennsylvania of the Friends. It is a fitting memorial to a great and good man.

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Visiting Hours:

10 A. M. to 4:30 P. M. Daily

●
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